

# 5 THINGS TO CONSIDER

if you are considering  
sales training



1

## DON'T TRAIN CERTIFY INSTEAD



Most training efforts focus on giving information to the learners but rarely spend any time confirming or certifying that the learners can actually perform the skill or concept they were taught. A class may teach product specs, but it doesn't assess the rep's ability to appropriately convey the information when put in the appropriate selling situation. You may be showing your reps how to do a company and product presentation, but you aren't certifying that they can do it.

### Recommendation

Begin by setting a standard for what the desired outcome of the training effort should be. Then allot at least twice as much time for the learner to demonstrate the skill as you allocate for the instructor to teach it. That sounds like a lot, but which is more important:

- a) the instructor talks about the topic for two days or
- b) after two days each rep can perform the skill well?

2

## DON'T IGNORE THE DYNAMICS OF ADULT LEARNING



Telling ain't teaching, and Powerpoint ain't effective learning. Adults learn differently than the way we learned in school. Rote memorization and the "fire hosing" of product information are grossly ineffective. There is a science to teaching adult learners. Ignore these principles at your own peril. If you want to move the needle, understand how the gauge works.

### Recommendation

Utilize a team with experience in instructional design and experiential learning. Your team of expert educators should help design the approach and the content. This comprehensive view will make your efforts much more effective.

3

## UNDERSTAND THE CRITICAL ROLE OF YOUR FIRST-LINE SALES LEADERS



First-line sales managers (we call them sales coaches) will advance or erode your training efforts, sometimes even before the workshop is over. We've seen many a sales training where the sales manager doesn't even attend training. Or worse, they sat in the back and read their emails and worked on reports. A bad, horrible, and grossly unwise example for the team and shows your reps what leadership really thinks of the training. In the weeks following, sales coaches will either reinforce the skills and concepts or they will dismiss them. Sales coaches are your force multiplier, either for good or for bad.

### Recommendation

Start with your sales managers and get them together well before you train your sales reps. Emphatically communicate the importance of their role, engagement, and participation. Clearly explain the expectations during the training and in the weeks/months following it. Don't assume that your leaders know everything that is being covered. Have skill-building available for them before and after you train the field reps. This takes more time and effort, but it is the single best way to improve the effectiveness of your training efforts.

4

## INCORPORATE A BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH



Blended learning is the concept that states there are different content delivery mediums (classroom, online, printed materials, coaching activities) and each has its own set of advantages, disadvantages and costs. Get the highest retention/adoption rates and the best bang for your buck, by using the correct medium for each type of content to achieve your desired outcome.

### Recommendation

Find the HRD (Human Resource Development) person within your company and discuss blended learning. If you don't have an HRD person, you can call us for more details. Either way, you should marry the content with the method of delivery, with the frequency of learning. It sounds complicated, but 10 mins with an experienced learning professional and you'll see the benefits and that it's not really that tough.

5

## QUESTION: WHAT DOES "GOOD" LOOK LIKE?

Have you documented 'good'? - "I can't describe it. But I know it when I see it," is how the old phrase goes. When developing a sales team, being able to point to written, recorded, documented versions of "good", no matter what it is, is invaluable in moving the team to a common level of performance.

### Recommendation

Brainstorm with your team about the things that make a prototypical sales superhero in your company. Throw out the extremes and the outliers. Document the attitudes, aptitudes, abilities, knowledge, skills, and results. Once you've done that, you will have a map, a standard, by which to measure all performance. You will know what good looks like.



## CONCLUSION

By leveraging these five concepts, you are guaranteed to improve the effectiveness of your selling skills and training efforts. If you are a sales executive, a few of these might seem foreign. They should. They come from the HRD world. Sales executives are typically great sales people, leaders, and operationally focused. Great sales leaders rarely come out of the human resources department. Focus on sales and have a team of experts who focus and live this "development" stuff help you get your team to where you want them to be.

Top Gun Sales Performance is a sales tools, training, and technology company that helps grow the people and the systems that grow your revenue. Learn more about how better selling skills and a better selling system can help you.

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